



Taking the Initiative to Lessen Flood Losses to Community Complex

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Pleasants County, West Virginia

St. Marys, WV - Hurricane Ivan (2004) raised the Ohio River up to the rafters at St. Marys Community Hall this past September. But thanks to a progressive local government with some creative ideas for providing manpower and financing, the community is on its way to dramatically reducing future flood damage at their community complex.



The flood damage caused by the winter storm of 1996 had compromised an already questionable electrical installation, and by 2004 it was no longer compliant with recent codes for electrical systems. This problem initiated City Council meetings that led to a three-phase program. The first phase included digging up and replacing all outdoor underground electrical wire and conduit, as well as installing and raising five new electrical boxes out of reach of future floodwaters. Mark Jackson, St. Marys City Manager, stated, "This mitigation project was long overdue. With the help of a legislative Budget Digest grant and surplus tax revenues provided by the City of St. Marys, the first phase of our mitigation project was completed."

An initial \$25,000 was provided through the efforts of State Senator Donna Boley via the Budget Digest. The remaining two-thirds of the \$70,000 budget were met through surplus city tax revenues. It could have cost a lot more, but creative foresight cut the projects' labor costs dramatically by using inmates from the local North Regional Jail as well as City employees.

Phase two began after Hurricane Ivan's dramatic flooding, which inundated the St. Marys Community Hall up to the rafters. The good news was that the previous work was not in vain: the outdoor, main 800 amp panel and meter were not flooded. The bad news was that their community hall was heavily damaged. This time, they opted to use flood damage resistant materials and fixtures.

The hot water tank was fitted with a Quick Disconnect and all wall outlets were raised 4 feet above the finished floor. The gypsum wallboard and fiber ceiling tiles were replaced with water and mold resistant paneling. The pine trim was removed, the mold cleaned up, the walls disinfected, and the nails replaced with screws. The next time it floods there will be no need for the trim to be ruined; they can be unscrewed, cleaned, disinfected, and then replaced. The old wooden cupboards will be replaced with new stainless steel ones.

The third phase plans are to replace the remaining fixtures. The wet, ruined fiberglass and insulated doors will be replaced with foam core insulated ones. This prevents mold build up and the loss of insulating properties when the insulation gets wet. The plans also include replacement of all the double pane glass windows with Quick Remove ones to prevent floodwaters from seeping in and filling the air space. The furnace will also get a Quick Disconnect for easy removal prior to a flood. Finally, they will be adding roofs to all the outdoor electric panels.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region III**

State: **West Virginia**

County: **Pleasants County**

City/Community: **Saint Marys**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Flood-proofing; Elevation, Utilities; Mitigation Planning/Disaster Resistant Universities**
Structure Type: **Wood Frame**
Activity/Project Start Date: **01/2004**
Activity/Project End Date: **10/2004**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2004**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.floodsmart.gov>**
Reference URL 2: **<http://www.wv.gov/>**

Main Points

- An initial \$25,000 was provided through the efforts of State Senator Donna Boley via the Budget Digest. The remaining two-thirds of the \$70,000 budget were met through surplus city tax revenues.
- Phase two began after Hurricane Ivan's dramatic flooding, which inundated the St. Marys Community Hall up to the rafters.
- The third phase plans are to replace the remaining fixtures.